Castlemaine Naturalist 42

DECEMBER 1979

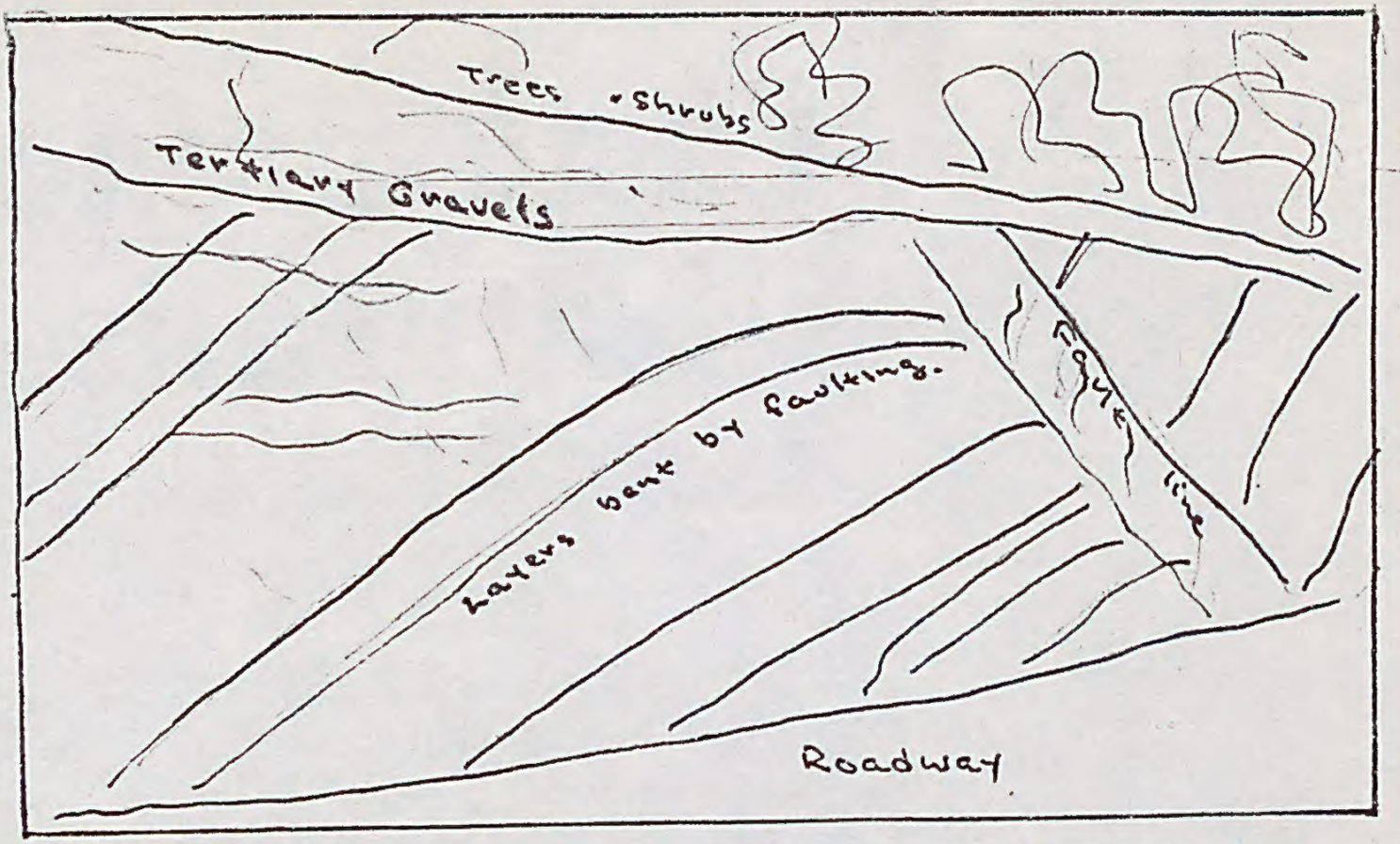
Pres: Mrs R. Mills Treasurer: Mr.L. Bransgrove.
Sec: Mr G. Sitch
News letter Editor: Mr. E. Perkins.

THE NEW ROAD CUTTINGS, CASTLEMAINE NORTH

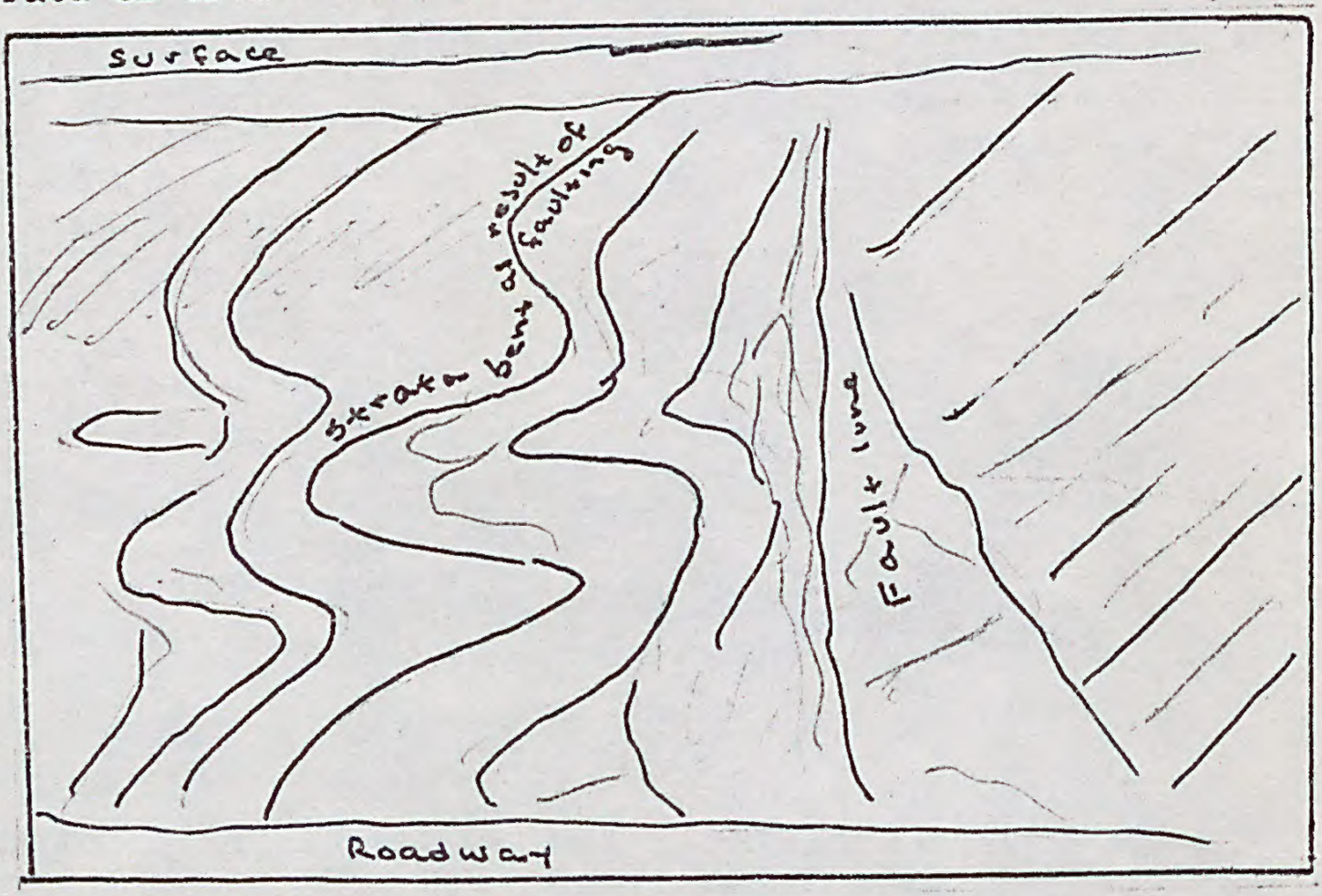
Two new rock cuttings have been made by the C.R.B. along the Midland Highway at Castlemaine North.

Near Sawmill Road intersection, the thin layer of Tertiary gravel can be seen overlying the much older Ordivician rock. In the railway cutting, the gravel is thicker, and has been tunelled under by miners. These gravels were once part of an ancient creek bed (possibly the ancestral Barkers Creek). Since then, the creek has taken a slightly different course. There has been constant erosion and the creek bed is now at a much lower level.

There is an age difference of about 500 million years between the top and bottom layers of rock.



In the cutting a little to the north of Sawmill Road, two fault lines can be seen.- identified as such because the strata on either side do not match. There has been slippage



along the fault line, and in these examples the pressure has been enough to bend (and in one case, fold) the rock on the north side of the fault.

COMPETITION BETWEEN DESERT MICE IN ARIZONA

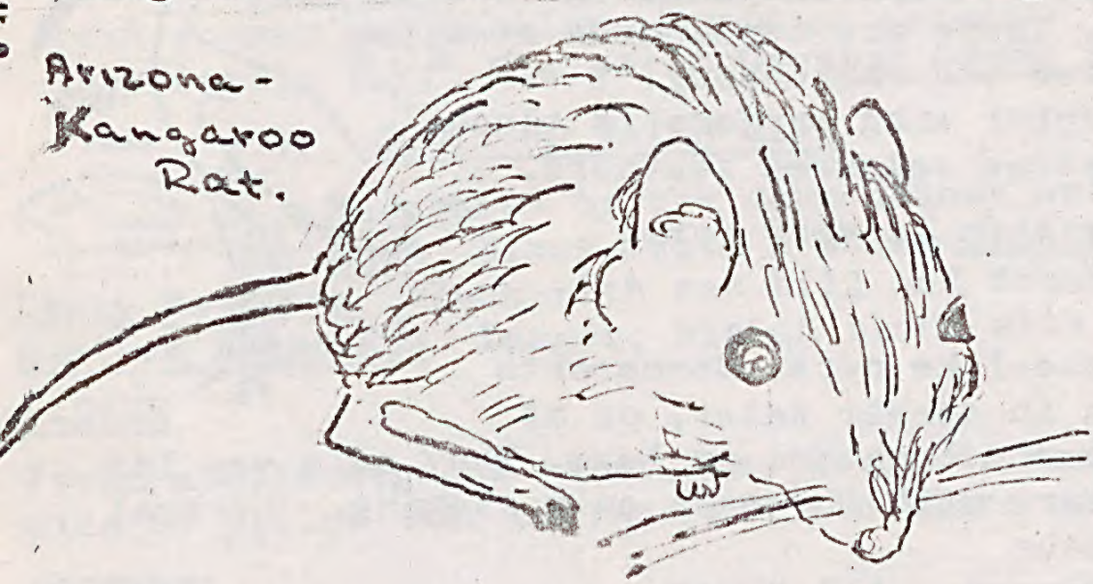
(This article is about two American species, but could well apply to animals in the Australian deserts)

Animals that compete for the same food cannot exist together for long; in time one will completely replace the other.

Two seed eaters of the Arizona desert, the Kangaroo Rat and the pocket mouse appear to live successfully together. How they can do this has only recently been explained.

Seed is usually spread more or less evenly over the ground, but sometimes seed collects in hollows and depressions in the ground.

Night observation of the two species using night-viewing devices shows that the Kangaroo Rat moves rapidly from its burrow for a distance of 50 metres or more, and searches for the pockets of seed. Being a hopping animal it can move very efficiently at high speed, and actually uses less energy at high speed than the Pocket Mouse one third its size. Since the pockets of seed are separated by long distances, an animal using these needs to be able to move long distances quickly and efficiently; the Kangaroo Rat is just such an animal.



Arizona - Kangaroo Rat.

Hopping animals cannot move efficiently at low speeds and so the Kangaroo Rat could not afford to make use of the seed scattered over the surface.

The Pocket Mouse on the other hand, does not move far from its burrow, and uses the seed scattered on the surface. It moves efficiently at low speed but is inefficient at high speed. It could not afford the energy needed to search for the clumps of seed.

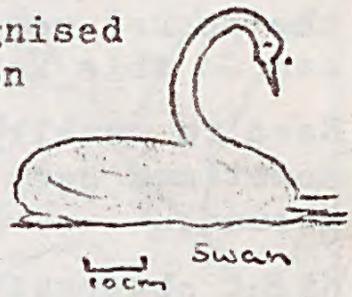
Thus, the two animals do not compete; they both eat seed but in different areas. Surprisingly, the seed eating ants present the greatest competition to the Kangaroo Rat, and the two are in severe and continual competition for food.

COMMON BIRDS OF BELLS SWAMP

PELICAN Is easily recognised by the large size and the bag in the beak.
It is fairly common on deeper water.

BLACK SWAN

The black swan is easily recognised by the long neck. It is common on fairly shallow water, but is less common where the water is deep.



EGRET

Recognise by the pure white colour and the large size. They are fairly common at the edge of water. The large White Egret is the only common species.

IBIS

Ibis may be recognised by the large curved bill and large size. They are common on swamps and in paddocks. There are two common species.

White ibis Black head and white body.
Straw-necked ibis Upper wing surface is black. The lower neck has straw coloured feathers.

The all black Glossy Ibis is very rare.

CORMORANT (Shag)

Recognise by the snake-like neck. Cormorants are common in deeper water, or at rest on nearby branches or logs. They swim vey low in the water, with the neck only showing. Several species occur

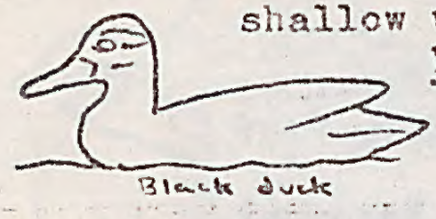
Black cormorant All black
Little black cormorant All black, but smaller
Pied Cormorant Black above, and white below. It is similar in size to the black cormorant.
Little pied cormorant Similar, but smaller.

With a little practice, it is fairly easy to judge the size of these. The Darter (Snake-bird) is similar to the cormorants but has an even more snake-like neck. The darter is also much less common.

HERON Two species occur in swampy areas.
White-faced heron (Blue Crane) Recognise by moderate size, grey body and white face. It is very common.
White necked heron Is larger and less common. It has a white neck and blackish body.

SPOONBILLS

Recognise by the white colour and spoon-shaped bill. Spoonbills are found in shallow water. There are two kinds

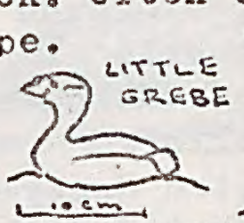


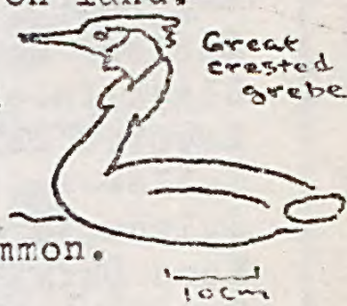
Yellow spoonbill Yellow bill- the most common spoonbill.
Royal Spoonbill Black bill- it is rare.

DUCK AND TEAL

A number of species are fairly common.
Black duck Fairly dark, with lighter stripe across the eye.
Grey Teal Similar to black duck, but without stripe near eye.
Wood Duck Grey bird with dark stripe on back. Often on land.
Musk duck A dark duck with distinctive shape.

GREBE (Dab-chick)





The Little Grebe and Hoary Headed Grebe are both common and similar. Found on water; they rarely fly. The great Crested Grebe is less common.

COOT AND WATER HENS

Recognise by the dark colour and frontal plate.
Coot Black, with a white frontal plate and bill
Dusky Moor-hen Black with red bill and frontal plate.
Eastern Swamp Hen Larger; bluish black with red bill and plate.

PLOVER

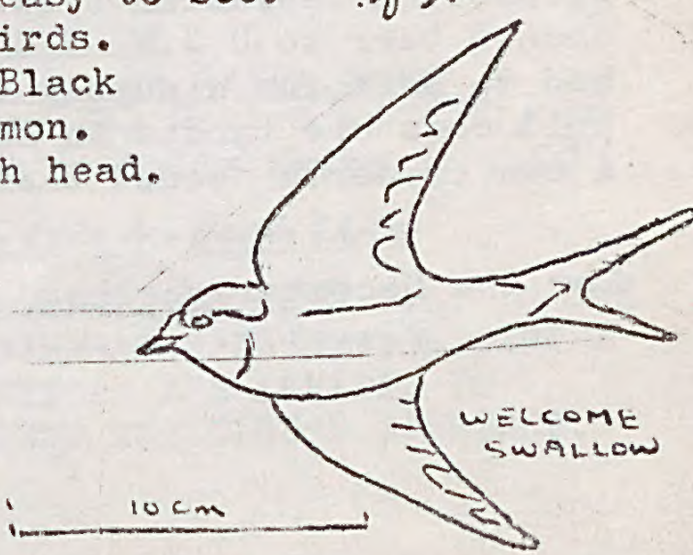
Found at the edge of water, on the land. Recognise by yellow mask on face and its alarm call.

DOTTEREL

Dotterel are common along the edges ofswamps and lakes, but are not easy to see. They are fairly small birds.
Black fronted dotterell Black band across the chest. Common.
Red capped dotterell Reddish head.
Other kinds are less common.

SWALLOWS

A number of birds are commonly found near water. Swallows are perhaps the most universal.



BIRDS IDENTIFIED =Maldon-Castlemaine Railway Ramble Oct 13,1979

White-faced Heron
White Naped Honey-eater
Supberb Blue Wren
Scarlet Robin
White-backed Magpie
Welcome Swallow
Nankeen Kestrel
Fuscous Honey-eater
Striated Pardalote
White-eared Honey-eater (on nest with 2 eggs and 1 chick)
Orange-winged Sitella
Grey Currawong
White-throated Tree-creeper
Grey Shrike-thrush
White-winged Chough
Eastern Rosella
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Crested Bellbird
Yellow-tufted Honey-eater
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Wood Duck
Spur-winged Plover
Willy Wagtail
Mountain Duck
Magpie Lark
Galah
Fairy Martin
White necked Heron
Little Pied Cormorant
Kookaburra
White-plumed Honeyeater
Restless Flycatcher
Red Wattlebird
Red-rumped Parrot
Grey Teal
Hoary Headed Grebe
White-eyed Duck
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Olive-backed Oriole
Brown Thornbill
Spotted Pardalote (a pair at their nesting burrow just W. of Castlemaine)
Starling
House Sparrow
Blackbird.
Rufous Songlark.

(Total for trip - 45 species. List by Stan Bruton)

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RINGPULL CANS T Collins

Have you noticed how our parking areas, tourist areas or those little picnic spots are littered the ringpull of cans? The ground is strewn with them. The can may go into a rubbish container but the pull usually goes into the scrub or on the ground. Being made of non-rusting metal it will never disappear.
Recently a Tasmanian brewery supplied a trial shipment of canned beer to U.S.A. The shipment was delayed because they had to wait for a supply of cans without the ringpull. Ringpull cans are banned in America where the shipment was going. A can openeris needed there. So why not here?

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For the December meeting, bring a plate for supper.

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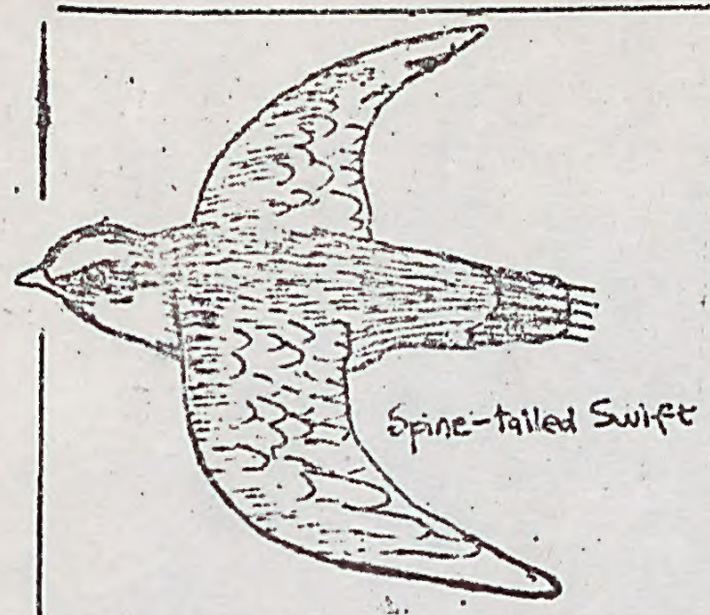
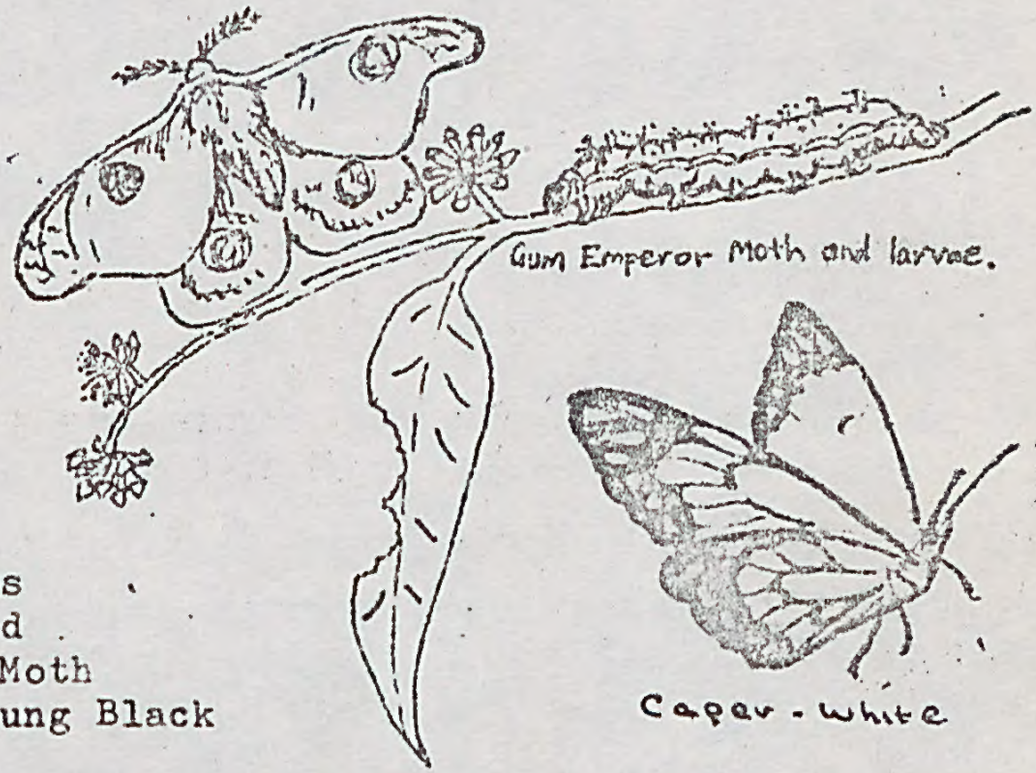


OBSERVATION CORNER

Look for these during summer

1. Caper White butterfly Watch out for Caper White migration during the first few weeks of December. Try counting the number that pass over a fenceline over a timed minute.
2. Swifts The swallow-like Spinetailed Swifts often appear on the humid thundery afternoons of December and high in the heavens
3. Wasps See if any winged ants or wasps are rising. Catch one and examine it carefully.
4. Caterpillars Look for the colourful Emperor Moth larvae on the broad-leaved gums and the flattened dark green Hawk Moth larvae on the young Black Wattles.



5. Weeds Look along unwatered roadsides and nature strips. How many plants remain green throughout the summer? Which?

Acknowledgement : Gould League

CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB PROGRAM

Meetings

Fri Dec 14 Birds
Bird Observers Club slide set.
Organiser: M. Winterbottom

Thurs Jan 24 Business meeting

Fri Feb 8 Annual Meeting
Speaker to be arranged.

Thurs Feb 22 Business meeting

Frid Mar 21 Photoflora 80

Excursions

Sat Dec 15 Bells Swamp
Leave Ed. Centre at 1.30, or meet at Bells Swamp at 2.00

Sat Feb 9 Pond Life

ALL MEETINGS AT 8 P.M. IN THE CASTLEMAINE EDUCATION CENTRE
VISITORS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE CLUB'S SESSIONS.

RIDGE ROAD EXCURSION 10/11/79

Above and below: Hard at work, observing fauna and flora.